



NEWS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Supporting an Air War

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DAVIS-MONTHAN AIR FORCE BASE, Ariz.—Identify the need. Validate it, and make it work. That is the agenda for 12th Air Force staff as it focuses on supporting an air war with an Air Force Forces staff during Blue Flag 01-1, from Dec. 9-14 here.

For the first time in a Blue Flag command post exercise, a Numbered Air Force is testing its procedures and staffing to validate the number of people needed to support an Air Force Forces function, said Lt. Gen. William Hobbins, 12th Air Force commander and exercise “dual-hatted” Joint Force Air Component Commander and AFFOR commander.

Traditionally, the Air Force has focused mainly on the operational side of warfighting — the Air Operations Center — in addition with this Blue Flag, 12th AF is also validating the support side — the Air Force Forces or AFFOR, said Hobbins.

“In a Blue Flag exercise, there is an inherent relationship between the AOC, which runs the air war, and the AFFOR component which supports the air war,” Hobbins said. “I wanted to use the normal interaction between the two functions in Blue Flag to validate the number of people I would need in my AFFOR section to support the AOC and its operations.”

“This is a step in the right direction,” said retired Lt. Gen. Joseph Hurd, A. F. Command and Control Training and Innovation Group’s 505th Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Operational Command Training Program senior mentor for Blue Flag. Hurd and the OCTP provide guidance and information to the current commander based on personal experiences.

“In the past the Air Forces Forces execution was not as robust as it should have been to keep the AFFOR commander informed with the indepth information and management functions that are needed. This exercise is helping them address some of those problems,” Hurd said.

The 12th Air Force staff has been responsible for executing the Air Force Forces portion of Blue Flag since it would be the core of the staff to deploy during a contingency operation.

“Our primary purpose is to increase our readiness to deploy, both the AOC and the AFFOR,” said Brig. Gen. Barry Barksdale, exercise Deputy AFFOR and 12th Air Force Vice Commander. “We are also working to better define AFFOR

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Supporting an Air War

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mission, equipment, and personnel requirements.” The third mission, according to Barksdale, is to define the ability of the Numbered Air Force to meet requirements based on the limited manpower available within the headquarters staff.

One of the lessons learned for the AFFOR staff is the importance of the AFFOR and AOC to be located in the same general area, Barksdale said. “Although it’s not required, being collocated dramatically increases the synergy of effort. Communications are better, manpower can be reduced, and the operations are more efficient and effective—and that’s the bottom line—it helps the overall mission.”

In order to improve and learn about AFFOR functions, the exercise itself must present the AFFOR staff with a scenario that tests its abilities, and that is where the Air Force Command and Control Training and Innovation Group comes in.

The AFC2TIG’s 505th Exercise Control Squadron, who is responsible for running Blue Flag, has always worked in logistics issues into Blue Flag, said Mr. Boo Dodgen, AFC2TIG A-5, Plans, who helped integrate AFFOR issues into Blue Flag. Those logistics issues generally facilitated AOC-type processes. The AFC2TIG needed to integrate all functional areas involved in an AFFOR staff into the Blue Flag environment.

“We created approximately 100 specific AFFOR events and injects that stimulated all aspects of an AFFOR staff,” said Dodgen. “We wanted everyone on the staff to have something to do during the exercise from Personnel to Public Affairs and even the Chaplain.”

The events were interwoven with AOC Blue Flag events so that there was minimal contradiction with the events on the AOC floor, said Dodgen. The events also gave the AFFOR and AOC staffs an opportunity to open communications channels between the two entities.

As an example, if an aircraft crashed just after take off, the AFFOR functional areas could be the first to know and would be responsible determining the impact on the air operations center and coordinating a replacement aircraft.

A major hurdle the AFC2TIG team had to overcome was the education process involved with untried and untested AFFOR processes.

“We had to educate ourselves and our customer on what an AFFOR is and what it is expected to do,” Dodgen said. The AFC2TIG Command and Control Baseline Team has been working on an organizational baseline for more than two years. “This is a major milestone in the AFFOR baselining process.”

The 9-person AFFOR controller staff needed to simulate 14 base-level Expeditionary Operations Centers and many other organizations above the AFFOR staff.

“This has been a team effort to make this happen for the numbered Air Force,” said Dodgen. “We’ve capitalized on all the expertise that can be found at the AFC2TIG to provide 12th Air Force the best training environment possible.”

The level of enthusiasm, the intensity of the play, and the ground gained in building the AOC as a weapons system was very significant, Gen. Hobbins said. “It’s a tribute to the men and women who gave 12 hours a day, seven days a week to bring about the success of this Blue Flag.”